

Adapted from *The Parent Project: A Workshop Approach to Parent Involvement* by James Vopat

Vopat's workshops generally incorporate the following into their format:

- Journal writing
- Shared reading of children's literature
- A guest presentation on a topic of group interest
- An experiential activity
- Small and whole group discussion
- Home application of workshop strategies

Factor's Conducive to a Successful Workshop

- Getting to know who everyone is and calling him or her by their "preferred" name.
- Having co-facilitators (not doing it alone), most likely a parent and a teacher.
- Setting the agendas/topics for workshops with the participants.
- Asking for help with the various things that are necessary for the workshop (lists the two most time-consuming details as arranging for child care and buying/setting up/ cleaning up the refreshments).
- Remember the Golden Rule: Problem solving is more productive than blaming.
- Continuity—connect workshops directly to real life by assigning a home application.
- Sit in a circle.
- Do—don't just talk about doing.
- Always begin the workshop by reintroducing the group, doing a "getting to know you" activity.
- Be prepared to start late but end on time.
- Everyone should participate in some way in the workshop activities.
- Remember that the guest speaker should not necessarily have all the answers and that many things are best worked out together by the parents sharing their personal experiences.

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Sample Workshop Agenda

I. Greeting/Preview/Introductions (30 minutes)

- a. Welcome
- b. Preview of what the focus of tonight's workshop is going to be about.
- c. Everyone introduces him/herself, the names and ages of their children, and relates some comment that the workshop leader has suggested (ex: name something you and your children do to learn together at home).

II. Guest Presentation (30 minutes)

- a. Invite an expert to speak on a relevant topic.
- b. Suggested topics: fire safety, poisoning, the new math, self-esteem, journal writing, and child development.
- c. Discourage the presenter from lecturing and instead promoting conversation and interaction.

III. Break (10 minutes)

- a. Allow for socializing.
- b. Provide some time of food and drink, if possible.

IV. Regroup and Discussion of Guest Presentation (40 minutes)

Ask parents to respond to guest presentation and consider how they can apply the information to their home. Also, get suggestions on how they think the information applies to the school/classroom.

V. Assignment/Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

- a. Each person should plan a practical application of the subject of the evening's workshop that they will try out at home or at school (ex: checking a book out of the library with your child after a library field trip workshop, reading your favorite story aloud with your child and asking him/her to illustrate and discuss after a favorite books workshop).
- b. The next workshop will begin by sharing what happened when the last workshop's information was applied at home.